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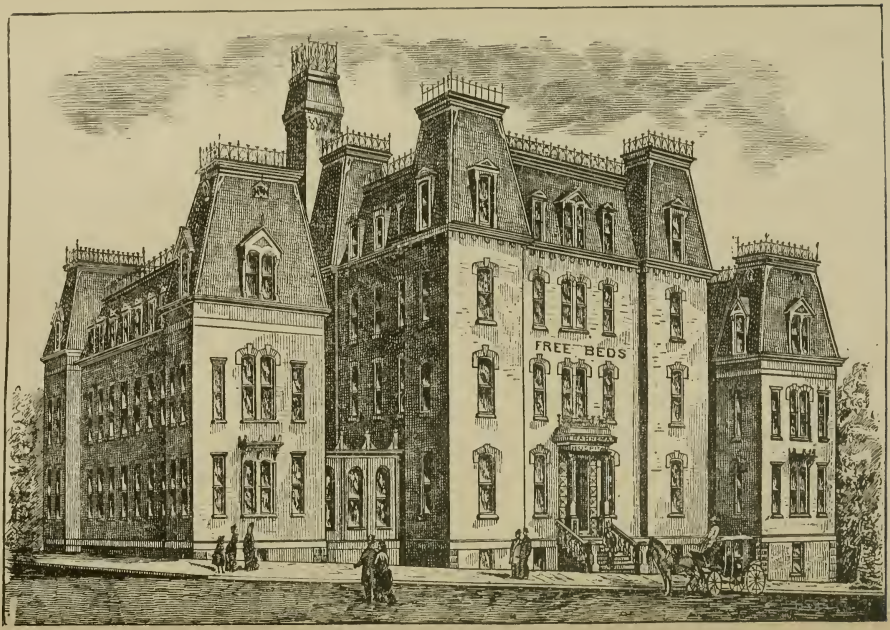
FREE BEDS

THE

CHARITY "BOOM."

BY THE AUTHOR OF "ME."

Caroline L. (Capron) Coe

"FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY:
THE GREATEST OF THESE IS CHARITY."

FAIR EDITION.

5278 £

PUBLISHED BY THE
HAHNEMANN HOSPITAL FREE BED FUND ASSOCIATION.
1880.

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1880.

Dedicated

TO

THE LADIES OF THE HAHNEMANN HOSPITAL

FREE BED FUND

FAIR ASSOCIATION.

EARNEST IN PURPOSE, UNTIRING IN EFFORT,
AND ABOUNDING IN KINDLY
MINISTRATIONS.

GOD AND THE SUFFERING BLESS THEM!

THE

CHARITY "BOOM."

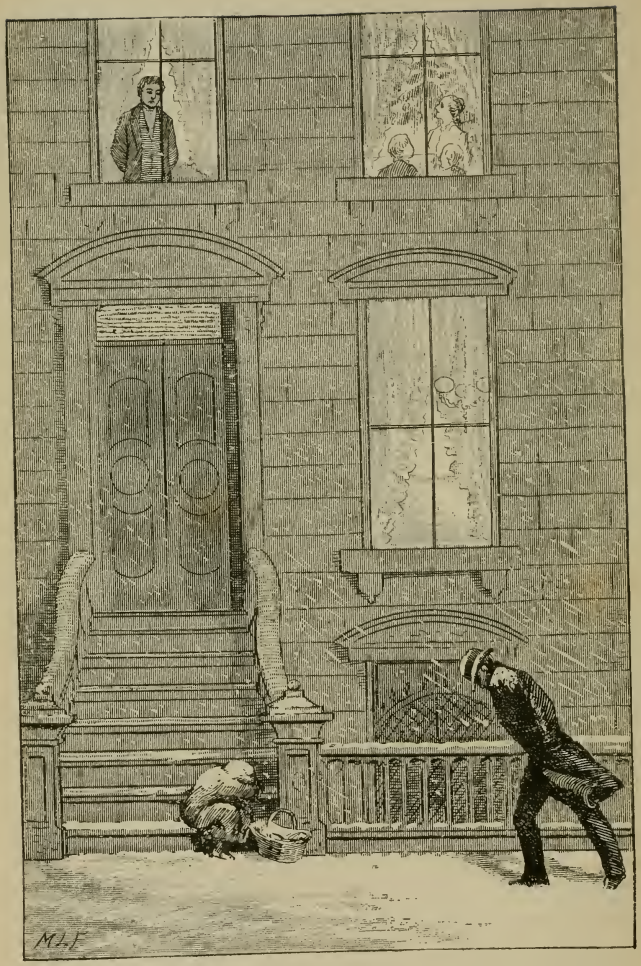
On the door-step—in the white light of
the waning Christmas moon,
When the wind shrieked round the cor-
ners and the fires burned low too soon,
When the pavement creaked the echo of
the passer's rapid tread,

Footfalls hastening to the welcome by
the cheerful fireside spread,
And great frosty tear-drops clustered
round the almost human eye
Of the o'erwrought beast of burden,
while in misty circles high
Rose the warm breath from each nostril,
wasting on the chill night air
E'en as life and heart are wasted by
the bleak breath of despair;—
Crouched a frail form with a basket,
scarce a woman, more than child,
And with crusts from out my basement
strove to sate her hunger wild;

While above the harsh wind's rattle I
could catch her bitter moan,
As she pressed her freezing members
'gainst the cold unfeeling stone.
And I watched her death-numbed features
ghastly in the pale moon ray—
Ah! the cold creeps in so surely where
gaunt Hunger leads the way!

But listen! the lips move: "Oh God!
tell me why
Thy great loving heart is unmoved by
my cry;

And why was I fashioned thine image
to bear,
And tossed on this rough world bereft
of thy care?
Great Father! *my* Father! for I am
thy child,
How canst thou be deaf to my anguish
so wild?
I'm starving, I'm friendless, despised and
forlorn,
All hope from this poor wretched bosom
is torn!
Can nothing arouse Thee? the last, the
last cry!


M.L.E

Great Father! Jehovah! *good Christ,*
let me die!"

Bright the coals gleamed on my hearthstone,
gaily waked the Christmas-cheer;
Soft eyes glistened in the gaslight, red
lips breathed in accents dear,
And I clasped my hands and muttered:
"Surely, hope, and faith are vain;
Heaven and very Hell are parted only
by a window-pane!

Is the God-heart less than human, is
Omnipotence a jest?
Do the faithful feed on falsehood and
is trust a myth at best?"
Then my fettered spirit shuddered at the
thoughts within me bred,
As I dared the impious question, stand-
ing with averted head.

That night in a vision an angel came,
And stood by my bedside and breathed
my name.

Her folded wings on her shoulders were crossed,
And the floating locks from her forehead tossed;
Her features were lit by a heavenly grace,
But my blood grew chill—'twas the outcast's face!
And I shrank with a mortal's dread amaze
From the piercing search of a spirit's gaze.
O marvel of living, O mystery of Death,
Immortality born of Life's wasted breath!

"I am come with a message," she sweetly said,
"From Him whom ye impiously dared to upbraid;
From the Father in Heaven, that Holiest One
Before whom your prayers and reproaches have come.

"'Remember the poor,'—'twas your burden each day
As round the home altar ye gathered to pray;
'Remember the poor,' and like incense most sweet

Your petition went up to the dear
mercy-seat;
'Remember the poor,' and the Great
Giver smiled
To answer the thought of His suppliant
child,
And made you his steward commissioned
to bear
The proofs of his love to the children
of Care.

"'*Remember the poor*, and He gave you
gold;

'*Remember the poor*,' 'twas increased tenfold;

'*Remember the poor*,' and He blessed your store,

With his choicest gifts it was teeming o'er;

'*Remember the poor*,' and the Heavens bent low

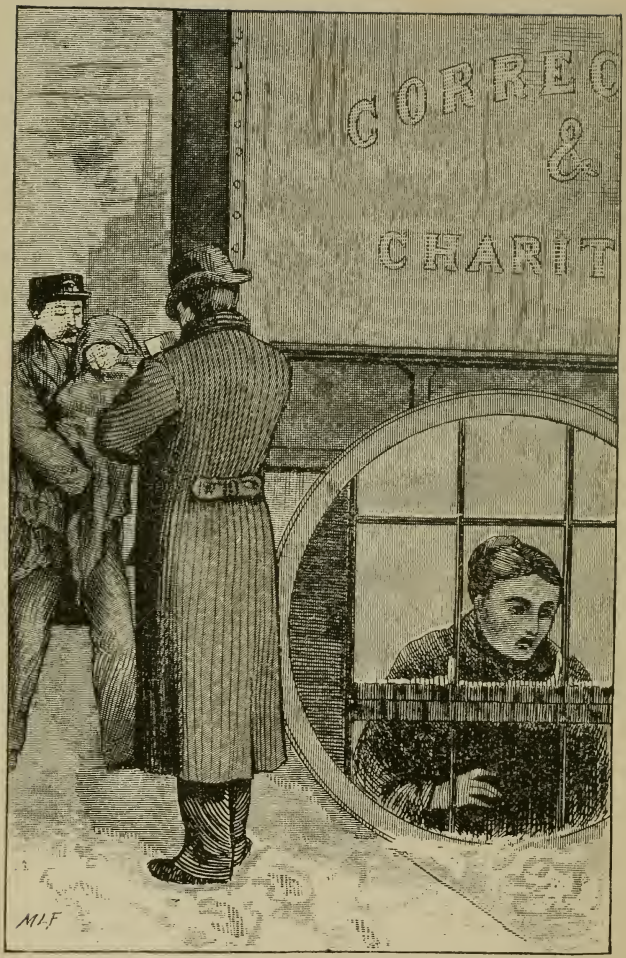
To the heart that was touched by another's woe.

"Now in silver, merchandise, gold and stocks,

In bonds, notes and liens under ponderous locks,
You're hoarding the treasures and still you pray,
'Gracious Father, remember the poor this day!'
Oh, easy of *conscience*, prospered Christian, take care
Lest you hide in your pocket God's answer to prayer!

In a basement hard by, a mother to-night

Is watching and praying and stretching
her sight,
As the shadowy figures flit to and fro
On the sidewalk that edges her window low.
But she listens in vain for the well-known
tread,
Of the delicate girl who went out for
bread.
On the hearth-stone the ashes lie cold
and gray,
The light in its socket has flickered
away,
And the cold creeps under the coverlet
thin:


CORREC
&
CHARIT
M.F

Nature struggles with death—but, *whose*
is the sin?

And greedy reporters jot down for the
press:
"Unclaimed at the Morgue—Verdict—
Case of distress."

Past the rifted cloud and far into the
blue
I earnestly gazed as the angel passed
through.

She shaded my eyes with her kindly spread wing
From the unrevealed glory of Heaven's Great King,
And showed me the treasures laid up for me where
The Saviour my mansion had gone to prepare;
Some spiritless ghosts of benevolent deeds,
Upon which a chronic self-righteousness feeds,
Some petty subscriptions, some clothes out of date,

Some coins dropped in church on the good deacon's plate,
Some soul-uttered vows, an occasional prayer
Wrung out by temptation, by sorrow or care,
A few loves unselfish, some aims stripped of pride,
Accepted because of the Jesus who died,
And above them all to my horrified sight,
The crust that was left on my door-step that night!

Now I care not what quibbling parsons may say
Of a genuine Hell in the good old way,
A most éxquisite hell for me it would be,
That crust e'en in Heaven to eternally see.

Ah! the finance of Heaven is not brokerage bold,
Where men deal upon margins and buy without gold,
And upon see-saws live, down or up as it may,

And the gains of a lifetime are lost in a day.

There the dollar is dollar, a dime is a dime,

Payments given at sight and in no case on time;

With the oddest results it cannot be denied,

For whether you multiply, add or divide,

You will only find—figure it up as you may—

That passed to your credit you've given away.

"The yearly reports then that publish my name
With laudable numbers attached to the same,
My gen'rous subscriptions, my offerings, and then——?"

They had their reward—they were seen here of men,
And the angels on duty vouchsafe to record
Only charities done in the name of the Lord.

We have prated of Charity loudly and long,
Have harangued the public with lecture and song,
We have opened our hearts to its clamorous call,
And done our whole duty at banquet and ball;
We have garnered our thousands with Tableaux and Fair,
And builded our hospitals high in the air,
We have frescoed their walls and have polished their floors,

Have widened their halls and embellished
their doors;
Great beautiful structures commanding and
bold,
But strongly secured with a fastening of
gold,
Which mocks at the penniless mendi-
cant's cry,
And stifles his plea with an "if" or a
"why;"
While free circulation, ten times in a
score,
Is checked by red tape if one gets
through the door.

A minute too old or a fortnight too young;

The wound of the lip should be one of the tongue;

The hump is of muscle, it should be of bone;

The cough has a nasal, not bronchial tone;

Acute inflammation affected the larynx,

This hospital treats only ills of the pharynx;

'Tis a carpal instead of a tarsal strain;

'Tis a ruptured nerve not a varicose vein;

That the adipose touches the heart may be seen,
Unfortunate creature, we doctor the spleen.
The left limb is fractured instead of the right;
You suffer at evening, we treat in daylight.

The lid of your eye, 'twere better the ball;
The liver at fault, we attend to the gall.

'Tis the upper instead of the lower face;
An ulna instead of a radius case.
We cancerous affections a specialty make,
This inclines a polypous nature to take,—
Till symptoms are made a distinction so fine
That a vertebra fails to suggest the spine.
And hence the close sieve of a medical view
Not one in a hundred poor creatures get through;

And like good resolutions, a pitiful horde,
These are laid by at last on a Hospital Board.
And so the great mass of the suffering poor
Only find under ground an infallible cure.

Or if to cold sect regulations take heed,
There is nothing so harsh as an unfeeling creed,

And this rigidly strict diagnostical sight
Is eclipsed by an orthodox stringency quite.
The holiest intentions, unfolding, are chilled
By "doctrinal points" into just souls instilled;
And the poles of the magnet most faithfully tell
How sectarian tenets good Christians repel;
Baptist, Methodist, Quaker, High Church, and a score,
Each honestly shouting "This way is 'THE DOOR!'"

Till *the faith* is become an indefinite word,

Dependent alone on the *place* where 'tis heard.

And though not in letter, in spirit 'tis true,

The food of the Gentile won't nourish the Jew,

Pray, into the Protestant Mission or "Home"

How shall the unsanctified Catholic come,

While the Sisters of Mercy slight mercy can feel

For the heretic sufferer's woe or his weal.
So we writhe and we suffer, and perish and die,
By the line and the plummet of Bigotry's eye.

More—churches are mortgaged and missions in debt,
Their current expenses reluctantly met,
While boards of trustees armed with by-law and rule,
The zeal of the ardent effectually cool.

In the temple of Faith with its far-reaching spire,
Its silver-toned organ and matchless-voiced choir,
Its carpeted aisles and cushion-lined pews,
Its gorgeous stained windows with soft blending hues,
Its velvet-laid altars with trappings of gold,
Where rich-surpliced teachers God's lessons unfold,
Ye mourn in your broadcloth, your velvet, your lace,

The *lien*-ness which shadows the holiest
place,
Since the Great God looks down and
discerns in the gloom
An incumbrance too great for just
Heaven to assume,
And while at the chancel your vows
you record,
The beggar outside may be nearest the
Lord.

But some men are wiser than most men
believe,

And for their short-comings find glorious retrieve
In the full consecration to Jesus they make,
Of what through the grave they are powerless to take;
So magnanimous selfishness ceases to breathe,
Consoled by a generous — "I give and bequeathe—"
Thus fervently hoping God's plans to o'ermatch
And forward their treasures by Special Dispatch;

Or chooses a proud *in memoriam* to build
Of granite or marble to charity willed,
Which Administrator or Judge perchance may
Decide is *no charity* since it *won't pay*,
And the good Book has made it exceedingly plain,
Bread cast on the waters is gathered again.

And in that grand spasm philanthropy feels

Producing convulsions of lancers and reels,

When the great hearts of beauty and opulence break

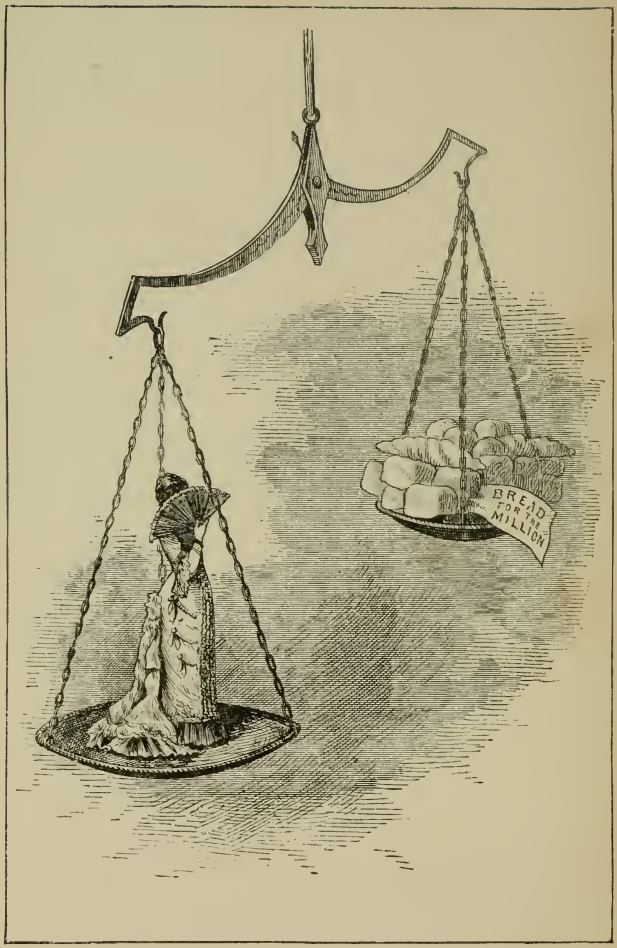
And pour themselves out for sweet Charity's sake,

When tailor and modiste and coiffeur combine

Their arts till the human is almost divine,

And arrayed *comme il faut*, of one beautiful belle

The value in figures is wondrous to tell,


BREAD
FOR THE
MILLION

And into the scale of just estimates thrown
Her fair market status will quickly be shown;
Not the lady herself—'twould be greatly unfair
With plain creature comforts her charms to compare—
But the outfit complete of one genuine belle,
When rated at par, let the honest weights tell.

The round *tout ensemble* an Avenue store—

Real Estate at an ebb--would provide, if not more.

The jewel confining her rich golden braid

Would purchase a butcher's entire stock in trade.

The quivering pendant just over her heart

Would set up the very best stand in the mart,

Green grocer or baker, or name what you will,

The weak to refresh or the hungry to fill.

While just one short yard of her elegant lace
Would get up a dinner deserving a grace.
The dainty trimmed slippers encasing her feet,
At Baldwin's would furnish a pauper complete.
The glittering solitaire adorning her ear,
Would pay for a modern-built flat a full year;
While necklace and mouchoir, and lastly the loves

Of bangles and bracelets and ten-button gloves,
Would light up a home lost in darkness before,
And keep the grim wolf from full many a door.

And now to this outlay, most generous be sure,
A ten dollar ticket we add for the poor;
But with ushers, bill-posters, *et caeteras* and gas,

This amount is reduced to a pittance, alas!

And though the small hours with the revel be filled,

The thousands go empty away from the Guild;

And by this grand farce 'tis most cleverly shown

How both ends of charity center at home.

Now into the scales toss your purses and needs,

Then toss in your duties and toss in your deeds,
Next toss in your faith and against it your cares,
And toss in your good works and lastly your prayers;
How curious to notice the odds at the ends,
So much on the turn of a pivot depends.

O ladies! sweet ladies! kind ladies and true!

Think just for a moment how much you can do.

Would ye light up another face sweet as your own.

And kindle a heart to the joy ye have known;

Would ye shield from the rude gaze a fair faultless form,

And shelter a soul from the world's cruel scorn?

Unglove your soft hands, there are tears to be dried,

And pillows to smooth whereon loved ones have died;

And sweet little mouths turning up to be fed,
And child hearts that flutter and watch for your tread.

Oh be of one sad home the angel, the light!
Your name its sweet watchword at morn and at night.
The spirit on earth of **Our Father in Heaven,**
Let **His name be hallowed** for joy you have given;

And by your kind deeds make **His kingdom to come,**

So best ON this **earth** shall **His** sweet **will be done.**

O be of its table the fresh **daily bread,**

And over the erring your sweet **pardon** shed,

And guard from **temptation** where want is the snare,

And rescue **from evil** some frail child of care ;

And so BE **His power and His** great **glory** shown.

Forever and ever by one of His own.

Amen, and then dance in your heartiest way,
For a time is to dance as a time is to pray;
And 'twill not be surprising, if heeding your call,
The angels come down to the Charity Ball.

But the great Metropolitan spirit is kind,
Though like pictured Justice the oftenest blind,

FREE BEDS
AND TRUTH MISSION
BIBLE
THE POOR
YE HAVE ALWAYS WITH YOU
WHO SHALL ARISE AND TESTIFIED ME

And her holiest thoughts and worthiest aims
Are hampered and clogged by invisible claims
Of pathies and schisms, of parties and power,
Which the rude wheel of Fortune reverses each hour.
So she gathers them up, the sick and the poor,
The lame and the weary, the mad and the sore,
The vile and the hungry, the pauper, the thief,

The children of vice, and the victims of grief;
So vileness and purity every day ride,
In "corrections and charities" thrown side by side;
And kindly removed from the great city's din,
The cess-pool of misery she huddles them in.

O missions of kind words, of fruits and of flowers,

Ye were born of a breath from elysian bowers.

O sweet loving faces, O delicate tones,
Rich echoes are ye from the heavenly zones.

O children of mercy, your beautiful hands
Are filling life's hour-glass with glittering sands,
Whose luminous atoms are catching the rays
Of beautiful sunlight to measure the days.

The Heart's-ease that fades on yon sufferer's breast

Is blooming for you in the Land of the Blest;
And the whisper of Jesus you breathed in his ear,
Is the song he shall sing in that holier sphere.

We travel life's roadway and little we heed
The God-given power of each thought, word and deed,
The weight of a smile or the charm of a tear,

The thrill of a whisper, the chill of a fear,
The tease of a glance, the check of a sigh,
The stab of a jest, and the hurt of an eye.

By the roadway, just there, is a daughter of shame,
A scar on her conscience, a blot on her name;
We loathing, with horror instinctively shrink

From lifting her fainting for only a drink;
But the great heart of Jesus is moved by her plea:
"*I* do not condemn"—Are we purer than He?

A father, a thief, hotly pressed by the law,
All eager her meshes about him to draw;
No plea for his crime save the echoes which come

From the famishing group in his desolate home.

But his free thoughts reach out to the glad hopes that cling

Round the great Judgment day of an omniscient King,

That rarest, that richest, that happiest of days

To the honest with God in his heart and his ways.

A neighbor, a friend in the days that have been,

With heart just as loyal, as earnest as then,
A bankrupt—what more? Ah, the story is old:
Love, friendship and faith even, perish with gold.

A child heart is skipping along in the way,
Unconsciously sporting with shadows that play
Now lengthening, now parting, now melting in one

As summery cloudlets coquette with the sun;
A waif on the wide world dropped down at your feet—
Oh, the prayer for the fatherless kneel and repeat,
And linger a moment, perchance ye may see
Whom the Father will send its *protector* to be.

A foot snare—take heed!—in the treacherous sand,
"I am blind, is there any will give me a hand!"

I am blind—pity, Lord! only dead eyes
can know
How dark is the road the poor sight-
less must go.

Oh, the struggle with poverty, sorrow,
and sin,
Is a struggle in which but the bravest
may win,
Though the faint heart must strive and
the faltering go
Where the battle is hottest and fiercest
the foe.

O ye stalwart of arm and unflinching
of nerve,
Truest heroes are made of the stout
hearts *that serve.*
Pale and dim is the banner protected by
might,
To the *rent* and the *crimson* brought in
from the fight.

The web of God's dealing is wond-
rously spun
With chequers and tracery, shadow and
sun,

And flecked with the atoms of man's
changeful life,
Which speckle the fabric with turmoil
and strife;
While spinning and weaving the hum
of the mill
And buzz of the spindle may never be
still,
For the warp is set taut and the woof
of each day
Is filling the shuttle, whose unceasing
play
Waits neither for tangle, for joy, nor
for fret,

For prodigal thought nor for useless regret.

But the texture is perfect, come sunshine, come gloom,

With man at the spindle and Christ at the loom.

Oh, pour out your love as God pours out the showers,

And scatter your smiles as He scatters the flowers;

Be the warm breath of truth like their fragrance distilled,

Till the darkest heart-corners with joy
shall be filled;
And sprinkle with good deeds life's
wearisome way,
And pray while you live, and then live
as you pray!

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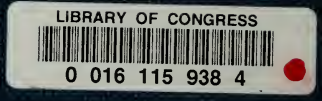
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